

## Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8459

SECDEF

INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

USNMR SHAPE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 01324

DEFENSE FOR ISA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, MCAP, NATO, UK

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE EUPHORIA AFTER REACTIONS TO  
THATCHER SPEECH ON DEFENSE POLICIES

REF: A) LONDON 1287; B) LONDON 956

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SUMMARY: CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS EUPHORIC ABOUT REACTIONS TO SPEECH LEADER MARGARET THATCHER GAVE JANUARY 19 ON DEFENSE POLICIES AND SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP. END  
SUMMARY

1. THE STRONG REACTION OF THE SOVIET UNION TO THE SPEECH CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER MARGARET THATCHER GAVE ON DEFENSE JANUARY 19 HAS PLEASED THE CONSERVATIVES. PARTY OFFICIAL WHO WAS HEAVILY ENGAGED IN PREPARING DRAFT OF HER SPEECH TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 27 THAT "TIMING COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER." HE SAID THAT HER SPEECH HAD DELIBERATELY BEEN SET (AS EMBASSY SUGGESTED REF B) TO BE ECHOED AS A RESULT OF HER VISIT TO BRITISH ARMY OF THE RHINE (BAOR). WHAT HAD NOT BEEN ANTICIPATED WAS THE AGGRESSIVE RESPONSE OF THE SOVIET UNION OR OF LABOR DEFENSE MINISTER MASON (REF A).

2. NET EFFECT OF CRITICISM ON SPEECH HAS REINFORCED MRS. THATCHER'S LEADERSHIP. SHE HAS AGAIN PROVIDED A CERTAIN TOUCH OF ELEGANT DRAMA FOLLOWING UP HER KENSINGTON SPEECH WITH THE VISUAL IMPACT OF CLIMBING INTO A TANK AND DRIVING IT IN THE COMPANY OF BRITISH SOLDIERS IN GERMANY. SOVIET REFERENCES TO HER AS "THE IRON LADY" AND MASON'S REFERENCE TO HER AS "THE BLUE MENACE" HAVE ADDED VALUABLE MONIKERS TO CONSERVATIVE PARTY TERMINOLOGY.

3. ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY USEFUL IN KEEPING MRS. THATCHER AND HER ACTIVITIES IN THE NEWS. THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, JANUARY 25, STRESSED THE LEGITIMACY OF HER CRITICISM OF DEFENSE POLICIES AND THE THREAT OF THE SOVIET MILITARY AND NAVAL BUILD-UP, THUS REINFORCING HER ARGUMENTATION.

4. MUCH READ AND OCCASIONALLY RESPECTED COLUMNIST BERNARD LEVIN IN THE TIMES OF JANUARY 27 ATTACKED THE CRITICISMS MASON MADE OF MRS. THATCHER ADDING FURTHER TO HER LUSTER.

5. IT CAN' OF COURSE, BE LOGICALLY ARGUED THAT WERE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSERVATIVES IN POWER NOW, THEY WOULD BE FORCED BY ECONOMIC NECESSITY TO MAKE CUTS IN DEFENSE SPENDING SIMILAR TO THOSE CONTEMPLATED BY THE LABOR GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, THE PARTY IN OPPOSITION IS NOT BOUND BY SUCH CONSTRAINTS, AND MRS. THATCHER APPEARS TO HAVE ADROITLY SEIZED UPON DEFENSE AS AN ISSUE ON WHICH CONSERVATIVES MAY ATTACK THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES WITH IMPUNITY. SHE SHOWS ALSO SOME INCLINATION TO FOLLOW A SIMILAR

TACTIC WITH REGARD TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN POLICY.  
WITH REGARD TO THE LATTER, SHE WOULD REQUIRE COOPERATION  
AGAIN FROM THE LABOR GOVERNMENT AND PERHAPS FROM THE  
RUSSIANS TO MAKE THE KIND OF SPLASH SHE HAS THUS FAR  
ACHIEVED WITH DEFENSE.

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## Message Attributes

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